

that he was—and he wearied himself with endeavours to change the discord into harmony.

"What are you going to do with yourself all day, dearest?" he said one morning, as he rose from the table and drew on his riding gloves. "I am sorry I have to be away on this tiresome business all day, but it cannot be helped; and I should hardly like to ask you to accompany me, even if the weather were not so very uninviting," glancing as he spoke through the window, where the landscape looked dull and grey under the November sky, while a bleak north-east wind tossed the trees to and fro, and ruthlessly shook down their few remaining leaves.

"O, I shall be all right," Evelyn answered, with a little involuntary shudder as her eye followed his glance. "I only wish you had not such a long ride before you on such a dismal day. I wish you would take the brougham instead, Arthur."

He laughed pleasantly. "No, thank you, my dear: no closed carriages for me! I don't mind a cold wind, even when it blows across the downs; and Mahmoud has often carried me on longer journeys and in worse weather than this. So you and Sophy must spend a cosy day together and be ready to welcome me back in time for dinner. Good-bye, dearest; good-bye, Sophy!" patting his daughter affectionately on her cheek.

Sophy glanced up without the ghost of a smile, and offered him a cold kiss. Her father regarded her for a moment with a wistful expression, and then turned to leave the room, his wife following him.

"You will be cold if you come to the door, my love," he said; but Evelyn only replied with a bright smile as she took a fleecy white shawl from the hat-stand, and throwing it round her head, followed him to the front door.

Mahmoud, Mr. Tremaine's favourite horse, was standing there in charge of a groom, his sleek black coat shining, his head moving impatiently, and his eager feet pawing the gravel walk.

Evelyn was ready with her usual caress for her husband's favourite, and with a handful of sugar which the intelligent animal knew well to expect. She stroked and patted him; kissed his velvety nose and bade him bring his master home safely and quickly. Then as Tremaine gathered up his reins and turned the horse's head down the avenue, she stood on the door-step watching him until the last moment, and waving him adieux.

The house felt very lonely and empty when she re-entered it, and yet it would be better by far, she told herself, to have no companion than silent, repellent Sophy, who had betaken herself to the window-seat with a book, and was crouched there reading, and never glanced up when Evelyn re-appeared. Mrs. Gray was away, so there was no one but the girl to keep her company.

However, the two interfered very little with each other, and scarcely met all day except at luncheon, which meal they partook of in almost unbroken silence.

Evelyn was restless and depressed all day, and would have almost been glad of Sophy's company to dispel a sort of nervous terror which seemed to have crept over her. But she would not condescend to ask any favour of the girl, and so tried to battle with her foolish nervousness alone.

The weary day passed somehow. The wind sank, and an intense coldness fell with the early twilight. The pools and little streams left by recent rain were turned to glistening ice; in the sky the stars began to gleam brightly and frostily. Evelyn declined to have the lamps lighted as darkness fell, but seated herself by the window to watch for Arthur when he should appear riding up the avenue. The time for his return was getting near, and how glad he would be to exchange the outer cold and gloom for the light and warmth of home! He might

come any moment now. Why, there he was! She was sure that was Mahmoud's hoofs clattering over the stones of the yard; but why had Arthur come in by the back way? Perhaps to save time; perhaps he wanted to get home as soon as he possibly could. She would run and meet him, and bring him into the fireside.

She tripped lightly down the stairs with a happy smile of greeting; but at the foot she encountered Sophy coming out of the schoolroom with a pale, anxious face.

"Your father has come back," Evelyn said, speaking more pleasantly than she usually did to the girl.

"Mahmoud has," Sophy answered, in an anxious, frightened tone. "I saw him come tearing past the window and rushing into the yard; but he was alone! Papa was not on him. What has happened, do you think?"

Evelyn caught the significance of the news in a moment, and her face turned deathly pale. Without a word she ran past the girl, through the side door, and out into the stable-yard, where, travel-soiled and foam-flecked, with his bridle hanging loose, and an ugly bruise upon his shoulder, as if he had had a severe fall, stood her husband's horse, while two or three of the men-servants were gathered round him in a sort of helpless bewilderment. What did it mean?

What it meant was that two miles away from home Arthur Tremaine was lying upon the road, helpless and unconscious! Riding home in the gathering darkness, his horse's feet had slipped on a treacherous ice-encrusted pool, and he had fallen heavily upon his side, flinging his master with violence to the ground as he fell.

They found Tremaine as he lay there, and quickly and carefully he was borne home, and the assistance of both surgeon and physician called into requisition. But for long their best skill was powerless to rouse the injured man from his deathlike unconsciousness. He had sustained a severe wound on his head, and the surgeon feared serious internal injuries, while coupled with these was the exposure to the severe cold of the night air. There was cause for the gravest anxiety.

And so, suddenly, fear and trouble fell upon the inmates of the Towers, and for days the angel of death hovered over that stately home with his sword drawn.

From his deadly stupor Tremaine only woke to the delirium of pain and fever, and each day the doctor paid his visits he grew graver and graver, and had no word of hope or encouragement for the young wife, who hung upon his verdict as if her very life depended upon his word.

She watched by her husband's side with unwearied love and care, with no thought for self, apparently unconscious of fatigue in her terrible dread and anxiety.

Poor Sophy was excluded from the sick-room, though she pleaded hard to be permitted to share the watching.

"You could do no good, my dear child," said old Dr. Merlin, who had known her all her life. "It is no sight for you, nor would he know you. Rest assured that you shall hear when there is the slightest change, and God grant it may be a favourable one. Go and rest, my dear," he added, pityingly, touched by the white misery of her face.

But Sophy could not rest. Instead she would sit for hours just outside the bedroom door, that she might ask news of each and all who passed out. And there she would wait in a sort of heartbroken patience, torturing herself with the recollection of the breach that had grown between her father and herself, reviewing her own coldness and sullen behaviour, and seeing all at last in its true light.

"Oh, papa, papa," she moaned to herself, "I will be a better daughter to you than I have been if only you will live! To please you I will even try to love her, though it was she who seemed to separate us first. And yet—no; it was I. I was so jealous of your love. But